
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 13 March 2017

by C L Humphrey BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 30th March 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/H5960/W/16/3164733

8 Ravensbury Terrace, London SW18 4RL

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Western Sunsets Comercio Internacional Limitada against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Wandsworth.
 - The application Ref 2015/6103, dated 27 October 2015, was refused by notice dated 8 June 2016.
 - The development proposed is described as 'An application for full planning permission to demolish existing building to enable development of a part 3 and 5 storey building to accommodate 16 residential dwellings.'
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. Notwithstanding the description of development set out in the banner heading above, which is taken from the application form, it is evident from the submitted drawings that the proposed development is a part 3, part 4 and part 5 storey building. The Council's decision notice describes the development as 'Demolition of existing building and erection of part three, part four, part five-storey building, with basement accommodation, to provide 16 residential dwellings, including landscaping with cycle and refuse storage' and I note that the appellant has used this description on the appeal form. This revised description more appropriately describes the proposed development, and I have therefore considered the appeal on that basis as no party would be prejudiced or caused any injustice by me taking this course of action.
 3. I note from the evidence before me that the scheme was revised during the course of the application to reduce the height of the proposed development on the Ravensbury Terrace frontage by 1.6m and the height of the eastern elements of the development by 0.8m. Amended drawings showing these revisions were submitted to the Council and were considered by officers and members prior to the determination of the planning application. For the avoidance of doubt these revised drawings are: RF-011 Rev A, RF-100 Rev A, RF-101 Rev B, RF-102 Rev A, RF-103 Rev A, RF-104 Rev A, RF-105 Rev A, RF-106 Rev A, RF-201 Rev A, RF-301 Rev A, RF-302 Rev A, RF-303 Rev B and RF-304 Rev B. I have based my decision on the revised drawings since I do not consider that any party would be prejudiced or caused any injustice by my doing so.
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Main Issues

4. The main issues are:

- a) The effect of the proposed development upon the character and appearance of the area; and
- b) Whether or not the proposed development should provide or safeguard a riverside walk along the Wandle riverside frontage.

Reasons

Character and appearance

5. The appeal site is in light industrial use and is currently occupied by a range of single storey buildings and an open yard. The site is bound to the west by Ravensbury Terrace, to the north by low rise residential development, to the east by the River Wandle and to the south by a small tributary which emerges from a culvert at the eastern edge of Ravensbury Terrace.
6. The proposed development would provide 16 residential units in 2 elements. Along the western side of the site there would be a 3 storey block facing Ravensbury Terrace, and on the eastern side adjacent to the River Wandle the development would step up to 4 and 5 storeys (the riverside element).
7. Policy DMS 4 of the Wandsworth Local Plan Development Management Policies Document (DMPD) identifies the area as a location where tall buildings (of 5 storeys and above) are likely to be inappropriate and requires applications for tall buildings to address a number of criteria including demonstrating how the proposal successfully sits within the existing townscape and landform.
8. The riverside element of the appeal proposal would be situated in close proximity to the banks of the Wandle and would occupy the majority of the river frontage. Predominantly 5 storeys, and with a vertical emphasis culminating in a series of pitched roofs, this part of the proposed development would have an imposing form. The siting, scale and massing of the riverside element would dominate the setting of the Wandle and would be at odds with the low-rise character of neighbouring development to the north. As such, it would appear as an incongruous and discordant feature which would not relate well to the existing townscape and landform and would be highly prominent in views from the eastern side of the river and from Ravensbury Terrace.
9. The development to the south east of the appeal site on the opposite side of the Wandle within the industrial area on Groton Road is 2 - 3 storeys nearest the river and retains a number of undeveloped areas along the river frontage. The taller 5 storey element of the development is set well back from the river and is seen in the context of the substantial adjacent railway embankment. As such, this other development respects its riverside setting and integrates well into the surrounding landform. Therefore, this other scheme is not directly comparable with the appeal proposal and so I have afforded it only limited weight. It does not lead me to find the proposed development acceptable.
10. There is an extant planning permission for a 4 and 5 storey development to the south of the appeal site at 12A Ravensbury Terrace. I do not have full details of this scheme, which has not yet commenced. However, based on the evidence before me and my observations on site, No 12A is situated adjacent

to a significant area of industrial development and in fairly close proximity to the railway. As such, the site context of this other scheme differs to the appeal site and so is not directly comparable. Therefore, it too has limited weight.

11. For the reasons set out above, I conclude that the proposed development would have a harmful effect upon the character and appearance of the area. As such, the appeal proposal would fail to accord with the design aims of Policies DMS 1 and DMS 4 of the DMPD and Part 7 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Riverside walk

12. The residential development to the north of the appeal site extends to the boundary with the western back of the Wandle. Beyond that, development along both sides of Penwith Road extends up to the western riverbank. This established development creates a significant physical barrier to the provision of a continuous riverside walk along this section of the Wandle. Given these external constraints, it would appear unlikely that any riverside walk along the eastern edge of the appeal site would be able to connect in the future to a continuous route along the river and so to the wider Wandle Trail to the north. Indeed, the submitted evidence demonstrates that, in the vicinity of the appeal site, rather than following the riverbank, the proposed future route of the Wandle Trail Walk and Cycle Route would run along Ravensbury Terrace to the west of the site before joining up to the existing route on Ravensbury Road.
13. With regard to pedestrian and cycle connections to the south, I note that a revised scheme for the site at No 12A includes the provision of a riverside walk and there is a long-term aim to provide a footbridge from that site across to the eastern side of the Wandle. However, the layout of the appeal proposal would enable easy access to any such pedestrian and cycle links, and so the creation of a crossing over the tributary in order to connect to a future riverside route to the south would appear to be unnecessary as it would not be any more commodious.
14. For the reasons set out above, I conclude that the proposed development should not be required to provide or safeguard a riverside walk along the Wandle riverside frontage because an alternative route of equivalent width and equal amenity could be provided around the site and would be necessary for operational reasons. As such, the appeal proposal would accord with the accessibility and sustainable transport aims of Policy PL 10 of the Wandsworth Local Plan Core Strategy and DMPD Policies DMO 6 and DMT 3.

Other matters

15. I note that the Council raises no concerns regarding the change of use from employment, residential mix, density, space standards, daylighting and sunlighting and amenity, car-free development, flood risk, sustainability and the level of affordable housing provision. Based upon the evidence before me I have no reason to take a different view in relation to these aspects of the appeal scheme.
16. The appeal proposal was the subject of pre-application discussions with the Council's planning officers and officers recommended that planning permission be granted for the appeal proposal. Nevertheless, the local planning authority

is not bound to accept the recommendations of its officers and nor am I. Accordingly, I have afforded this matter very little weight.

Conclusions

17. I have had regard to the benefits of providing 16 additional residential units on previously developed land in an accessible location close to local shops, services and public transport links, to the abnormal development costs in respect of remediation and rebuilding the river wall, to the proposed contributions towards affordable housing and wayfinding markers to improve the Wandle Trail and to the Community Infrastructure Levy payment which would contribute to local infrastructure. However, neither these matters nor the lack of harm in respect of the second main issue would outweigh the harmful effect that the proposed development would have upon the character and appearance of the area and the consequent conflict with the development plan in this respect.
18. For the reasons given above, and having had regard to all other matters raised including the submissions of nearby residents and interested parties, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

CL Humphrey

INSPECTOR